



A Citizen's Guide to Participation in the Wisconsin State Legislature

Prepared by the Wisconsin Legislative Council Staff, 2013

Abraham Lincoln famously described the American governmental system as “government of the people, by the people, for the people.” These lofty words describe, at a minimum, our representative democracy, governed by officials elected by the citizenry. But public participation in government does not end at the ballot box. Citizens participate in all levels and branches of government. Three key ways in which citizens participate in the Legislative Branch are by:

- Being informed about the affairs of government;
- Communicating with their elected representatives; and
- Testifying at public hearings held by legislative committees.

This guide is designed to help you, the citizen, participate in the Wisconsin State Legislature. It is in the following parts:

Introduction to the Legislature

How to Find Legislative Documents and Follow the Legislative Process

How to Contact Your Legislator

How to Testify at a Public Hearing

How to Read a Bill

Glossary of Common Legislative Terms

Supporting Effective Lawmaking Since 1947

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